

William as an atheist. The Catholic malcontents of Hain-ault and Artois cursed the Peace, and persecuted the Protestants. In Guelderland, John of Nassau, patriot and stadholder, would not hear of liberty of worship or even of liberty of conscience. The debacle of the policy of toleration was thus complete. In Holland and Zealand the particularistic spirit concerned itself more with provincial than national interests. The hope of an united Netherlands on the basis of constitutional liberty and religious compromise was already shattered.

Equally ominous, Parma was steadily winning back town after town, steadily advancing northwards and eastwards towards the sea. "A veritable chaos," as the Landgrave of Hesse lamented, engulfed the land. William's scheme of an union on the basis of constitutional and religious liberty disappeared in the vortex of religious passions, political intrigue, and renewed war, nevermore to rise to the surface. Yet out of this chaos rose at least the partial union which was to prove the solid foundation of a free State, great and glorious beyond the most sanguine dreams of any living patriot. This foundation was laid in the Union of Utrecht in January 1579. It was the reply of the northern provinces to the Union of Arras, by which the Walloon provinces in the same month broke with the States-General as directed by William, and prepared to make terms with Parma. The Utrecht Union was the work of John of Nassau rather than of William, who only gradually veered away from the policy of the larger league, and still cherished the hope of shaping chaos by the help of France and Alen^{on}-Anjou. John of Nassau was in this matter more prescient than his brother, and under his auspices the defenders of Holland, Zealand, Guelderland, Zutphen, Utrecht, Friesland, and the Omme-landen solemnly agreed to form a closer union for the defence of religion and liberties. The deputies accordingly resolved "to unite themselves for ever as if they were one province, for their mutual defence against any enemy, foreign or domestic, but without prejudice to the privileges, rights, laws, customs of each province, town, and inhabitant." To this end a general imposition should be levied, fortresses built, garrisons maintained, and the inhabitants drilled in arms. No general